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Probe the KGB — for a change

Sen. Malcolm Wallop wants to know why there is such a gap between rhetoric and action in the Reagan administration's foreign policy. Continuing his vigorous course, he has now issued an eloquent call for Congress to investigate KGB activities in the United States.

The KGB is both the omnipresent enforcer of the total state within the Soviet Union and the indispensable adjunct of its foreign policy. It gathers intelligence, penetrates Western espionage agencies, and creates havoc. Many radical and terrorist groups in the West have links, of varying degrees of directness, with the KGB. The news that most Soviet nationals on diplomatic assignments are in fact KGB agents is strictly what-else-is-new to many within the FBI and the CIA and don't-be-silly to a resolute minority.

The problem should be aired publicly. Goodness knows we did as much to our own intelligence service, much to its detriment, and doubtless to gales of laughter in Dzer-

zhinsky Square. Must the requirements of democracy oblige us to investigate and restrict our own spooks while extending maximum First Amendment protection to those of the Soviet Union?

The hearings should include testimony by John Barron, the scribe who first made the KGB's style known to a mass audience, James Angleton, former CIA counterintelligence chief, who probably has a clearer picture than anyone of who works for which side, and Francis McNamara, former staff director of the House Committee on Internal Security.

No one is talking about a campaign that would tag as KGB anyone who once belonged to a radical party. The Wallop inquiry would target not "international communism," but a particular organization, and not everything that organization does, but only what it does in the United States. That is a big enough subject for any committee — which is why such a committee is plainly needed.